

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 419. NEW SERIES. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1876. PRICE TWOPENCE.

DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

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BOOK I. THE NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.
CHAPTER III. VENUS AND CUPID.

MR. PUNCH had an easy off-hand manner, and was not, I observed, in the slightest degree afraid of the policeman. Altogether I felt much reassured by the presence of Mr. Punch—I had always admired his exhibition, hailing it with hearty laughter if unable to bestow upon it any pecuniary recognition. I stole my hand into his and held him tightly. He entered into a colloquy—partly serious, partly jocose—with the constable, tendering his card, and, I think, half-a-crown. The crowd dwindled and dispersed. I was left alone with Mr. Punch. He called a passing coach, lifted me in, and we were driven away.

"You're not going home; not yet, little one," Mr. Punch said to me in the coach. "Are you frightened?"

"No," I said. "I was frightened; but I'm not now," for I felt very safe with him.

"Let me see. Why you must be the youngest. And your name is——?"

"Buppy Doubleday," I repeated. He surveyed me in some amazement.

"I don't think that can be quite right, you know. It's not very material, perhaps, but it's handy to have a name that can be laid hold of. I wouldn't call myself much out of my name, I think, if I were you. Let me see, the eldest was——?"

"Nick," I interposed.

"Right. The second was——?"

"Dolly."

"And the third?"

"Buppy Doubleday."

"Just so." But he shook his head, and looked rather perplexed.

"You've forgotten me! You don't know my name?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say that I knew him perfectly, that I should have recognised him anywhere, and that he was Mr. Punch, a personage of world-wide celebrity. Still I felt that there might be some inconvenience about so explicit a statement. And though he was Mr. Punch, it was with a difference. The Punch I knew so well was a Punch of the wood; now this was a Punch of the flesh.

I looked at him again. Did I know this human, life-sized Punch? My eyes again contemplated curiously his bright watch-ribbon and seals.

"Ah! you remember that? And the watch that was held to your ear, that you might listen to tick-tick?"

As he spoke he produced from his fob—with some difficulty, for he was tightly girt, and of corpulent form—a large gold watch, so large, indeed, for a watch, that it might fairly have been described as a small clock.

"You remember?"

Assuredly I had some vague recollection of that watch.

"It wasn't so long ago," he went on. "But it was late at night. You were brought down from your bed at my particular desire. You were terribly sleepy. The Dustman was in your eyes, that's what you call it. You listened to the tick-tick, however. You see I did not forget you. I've an eye for faces, that's how it is. I should have known you again anywhere. And I did pick you out of

that crowd in a moment; not in the least expecting to find you there. It was the moiest chance. I'd been out Battle-bridge way, to see after a Miss Biddy Molloy, who, they tell me, is a very fine model. She sits for the figure. But I didn't find her at home. Then I came upon you, my small friend. You're the only one that's got a look of your mother. Doris hasn't, at least I can't see that she has—no more has Nick—though Doris is an uncommon good-looking girl, to be sure, and Nick's a smart, straight-backed, strong-limbed lad. But you're really like poor Phillis; an ugly likeness, mind you, for your mother was a beauty. Ah! my boy, you little know what a narrow escape you've had."

I thought he referred to my being lost. But he continued:

"You were very nearly having me for your father. And it wasn't my fault, let me tell you, that you didn't."

This was to me a very mysterious piece of information. I did not fully comprehend it.

"Though, of course, if I had been your father, you would not have been yourself, exactly. At least, probability points to that conclusion. But I'm content with you as you are. I don't know that in any case I could have wished you to be different. You might be better-looking, certainly, but then you certainly are like Phillis, and altogether a decent sort of little chap. Though why they called you Basil—for that's your name, I'm clear about it now—heaven only knows! Why Basil? But then, why Doris? Why Nicholas? My name's Richard—Richard Leveridge. But I've always answered to the name of Dick. Your father was a fanciful sort of fellow from the first. I don't suppose poor dear Phillis minded. She wasn't a woman to cross him, or any man, except me—always excepting me—and so, he was allowed to christen the children just as he chose. Nicholas; and Doris; and Basil! It's quite a mercy he didn't call them by stranger names."

He had begun by talking to me; but now he was clearly talking to himself. He had apparently forgotten me altogether. I noted presently that there were tears in his eyes. He drew forth a red silk handkerchief, and therewith rubbed his lobster-claw nose, and produced loud clarion notes from that strange feature.

He roused himself, stared at me, pinched my cheeks, and patted my head. Suddenly he called upon the coachman to stop. He

left me for a moment to enter a shop—in Long-acre, as I learned subsequently—and purchased for me a huge lump of almond hardbake.

Mr. Leveridge (for that, it appeared, was his name) lived near the Strand, occupying the upper rooms of a large, tall house, that looked on to the river. There were so many stairs to be mounted, I know, that he felt it necessary to carry me up some of the flights; for although his legs were short, mine were shorter, and I could not keep pace with him.

The windows commanded a noble view of the Thames. I had never seen before a sight so fine and grand. The river I might have contemplated once or twice, perhaps, from a bridge; lifted up to the level of its balustrade by my father, or by the joint exertions of Nick and Doris; my chin and nose rasped against the granite in the course of that imperfect hoisting of me. But I now looked down upon the broad stream from on high; I could see bridge after bridge. The sky above was bright blue; the whole scene was radiant with sunshine and colour. The waters beneath, if a trifle brown in their shadows, were yet very sparkling when they caught the light. And they buoyed up such gaudy barges—all scarlet and blue, green and yellow—laden with hay and straw, almost to the immersion of their decks, with wide-spreading sails aloft, orange-tawny of hue, or a deep chocolate, with pleasant patches of a lighter colour. Then the forest of chimney-pots, of all shapes and sizes; the numberless houses rising tier above tier upon the opposite bank; and the dim undulating background of waving hills. And what tiny specks of things were the men and women, the horses and carriages, creeping like an insect procession over the distant bridges!

A narrow staircase led to the roof, which was flat, and railed in, and laid out to look like a garden. Here were rows and rows of flowers in pots, and sheltered by a convenient stack of chimneys, an arbour of trellis-work, with chairs and a diminutive table, painted bright green; and there were other delights and marvels; a magpie, a blackbird, quite a host of canary-birds, in a most spacious cage, and a hutch of rabbits, with tremulous twitching blunt noses and timid eyes, very busily engaged munching cabbage-leaves. It was a wonderful place, this roof-garden. Certainly I had never seen anything like it before.

"You must come and see my pets some other time, and learn their names, and talk to them, and hear them talk to you again," said Mr. Leveridge. "But now I think we must find Mrs. Crisp, and ask her to give us some tea. This is my studio."

We entered a large room, oddly lighted, as I judged, the shutters being closed over the lower window-panes. The floor was bare, but for a fragment of carpet in front of the easel. The walls were covered with drawings and paintings, framed and frameless; but all representative of undressed human beings in various postures. I thought it strange that so many ladies and gentlemen should choose to be portrayed in such an unclothed state.

A lady appeared—Mrs. Crisp, I decided—a housekeeper, neat of dress, portly of figure, elderly, with bands of gray hair smoothly arranged upon a rather puckered forehead. She was a trifle severe, perhaps, and oppressed with a sense of her responsibilities; but her brown eyes had good-tempered gleams, and her voice was decidedly musical. She held in her mittened hands a bunch of keys, suggestive of store-closets and wine-cellar, of jam-pots, preserves, and other dainties.

"I think he'd better be washed," said Mrs. Crisp, having eyed me narrowly for a moment.

"Wash him, by all means, Mrs. Crisp."

And forthwith I was divested of the best part of my attire. My recent experiences had, no doubt, been of a soiling nature. The staunching of tears with grimy fists and fingers is apt to leave zebra stripes of dinginess upon the visage; and hardbake, consumed with undue haste, patches the region of the mouth with sticky brown clouds.

There was a washing-stand in the studio, half-hidden behind a screen. The lavatory operations proposed by Mrs. Crisp were, therefore, accomplished on the spot.

"When nature gives you a chance always avail yourself of it," said Mr. Leveridge didactically, as he drew a little book from his pocket, and, to my amazement, began making a sketch of my small and almost unclad form. I very much wished that he could have waited until I was properly washed and dressed, brushed and combed.

Mr. Leveridge was quite composed, however; nor did Mrs. Crisp seem to find anything strange in his proceeding. So the shape of my limbs came to be duly registered in his sketch-book.

"Cupid. I've seen many worse Cupids. Would you like to be a Cupid, my little man?"

I scarcely understood his question.

"That's a Cupid," he said, "and that, and that." He pointed to certain pictures on the wall. "Wouldn't you like to be always a plump little boy, with wings and a bow and arrow—now driving a hoop, now throwing a quoit, now catching a butterfly, now riding on a lion, a swan, or a dolphin? Wouldn't you like to be a Cupid?"

"Please, I think I should catch cold," I said, meekly. He laughed obstreperously.

"Oh, such things as colds weren't known among the gods and goddesses. Colds began with clothes."

"And I shouldn't like to be always a little boy. I should like to grow."

"Well, well, that sounds reasonable. You can grow to be an Adonis, a Mercury, a Mars. But, meantime, you're a Cupid. And that's Venus, yonder by the door. And there's another Venus over the mantelpiece. In fact, there are a good many Venuses about. Venus was your mother, you know. Alack! What am I talking about? Your mother was Phillis—poor Phillis—and your father's Duncan Doubleday. I wish I had a drawing of Phillis. I made one once, but it did not please me, and I tore it up. I only wish I had it now. But that's life, that is; we're for ever destroying what we ought to preserve. Yes, and preserving what we should destroy."

And after that observation Mr. Leveridge was silent for some time.

Presently we had tea—with eggs and muffins, ham and buttered toast, cake, jam and marmalade. I had never sat down to so complete and sumptuous a repast.

After that I was taken home in a hackney-coach by Mrs. Crisp, "with Mr. Leveridge's kind regards to Mr. Duncan Doubleday."

Before I left him—and I left him with considerable regret—Mr. Leveridge took me up in his arms, kissed me, gave me a bright shilling, stuffed my pockets with cake, and made me promise that I would visit him again at an early date.

CHAPTER IV. UNCLE ISAAC.

CONSIDERABLE astonishment was occasioned by my return home in so grandly triumphant a manner—the occupant of a hackney-coach, with Mrs. Crisp, in a very large and ornate bonnet, seated

beside me. Certainly my absence had induced much less excitement. Something to my mortification, I discovered, indeed, that I had not really been very much missed. A certain guilty feeling in regard to me had oppressed Nick and Doris, and they had taken turns in running out to the street-corners, every now and then, to watch for my coming, or to see if I were in sight. But they felt sure, so they professed, of my return home sooner or later, and had not been really uneasy about me for one moment. Nevertheless, I thought I saw the stains of tears upon Doris's cheeks.

To my father the fact of my absence had scarcely been made intelligible. He had been absorbed in the design for a new St. Paul's or an improved Westminster Abbey, or some such useful work.

"Ay, ay," he said, with a sort of vague cheeriness usual with him, when circumstances he did not fully comprehend were presented to his attention. "Ay, ay," as though uttered by a cordial seaman of vacuous mind. "So you were lost, were you, Basil? or thought you were lost. And now you're found again. Eh? Is that it? Found again, as a good many things are found, you know, before they're really lost. And Mr. Leveridge sent you home, did he? Very kind of him, I'm sure. 'With his kind regards'—most polite. Oh! and this is Mr. Leveridge's housekeeper. I hope I see you well, ma'am. I'm greatly obliged to you, and to Mr. Leveridge also, of course, for the kindness shown to my little boy. You and I have met before, I think, ma'am, and your name is—yes, of course, Mrs. Crisp—how do you do, Mrs. Crisp? You will make my best respects to Mr. Leveridge, and you will thank him very much in my name for his kindness to my little boy. And you yourself, my dear madam, you will take a glass of wine, I daresay, or a nice cup of tea—if there is water boiling, or the kitchen fire's alight, about which I cannot be sure? Eh? What? Nothing! dear, dear, dear, this is really sad."

Mrs. Crisp took leave of me in an affectionate manner. We had come to be on very friendly terms, altogether, in the course of our ride to The Polygon.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed my father—but sometime after the departure of Mrs. Crisp. "I suppose now I ought to have paid for that hackney-coach. Why, of course I ought. Why didn't some one remind me of it? Not that I happen to

have money enough in my pocket, by the way. Still one ought to bear in mind one's duty in matters of this sort."

"So Mr. Leveridge was kind to you, was he, Basil? Ah! He's an odd fellow is Leveridge. Not what I should call a practical man, you know. Rather flighty and crotchety, a little wrong here perhaps;" and, as he spoke, my father tapped his forehead; he was not addressing me so much as musing aloud. "But clever, oh yes, very clever in his way. Might have done better perhaps. Still, he must have done very well altogether. Astonishing that people should care to buy those undressed subjects that he's always painting; but they do! Ay, ay, and pay prices for them too. Altogether, Leveridge must be a very well-to-do man, for one who is so eminently unpractical."

If Nick and Doris experienced a feeling of relief at my return home in safety, that sentiment was soon subjected to certain reactionary processes. From their point of view, probably, I seemed to be constituted a hero upon very slight, if not wholly unwarrantable, grounds. I was almost obtaining rewards for conduct of a foolish sort; and, perhaps, they viewed me with a feeling of envy, on account of the novelty and magnitude of my adventures.

"Well, you were a silly to miss us," said Doris.

"How could you be such a little donkey?" demanded Nick.

"It's so stupid to lose people."

"Yes, and so babyish."

"But that's always the way with you, Buppy; you go gaping about, and never look where you're going to."

"We won't take him out with us again."

"Or, if we do, he mustn't leave go of my hand."

"I hate a stupid," Nick announced, with a contemptuous toss of his head. "It shows such want of sense—getting lost. And there's something low about it. No gentleman ever gets lost; nobody with any bravery gets lost. It's only babies and cowards that such things happen to. And then to stand crying at the corner of the street, until policemen and all kinds of horrid people gathered round! I call it odious. I should be quite ashamed of myself, if I were you, Buppy."

"Did you really cry, Buppy?" Doris asked. I confessed that I did.

"And were you very much frightened, Buppy?"

I owned to being rather frightened.

"Poor little Buppy!" said Doris, sympathetically. And she drew me towards her, and kissed me.

Then they compared notes as to whether they remembered my friend, Mr. Leveridge, whom I had likened to Punch. They possessed some vague recollection of him it seemed. He had called two or three times, at rather long intervals, and they had been introduced to him; but he had left no very favourable impression upon them.

"I don't like a man with that shaped nose," said Nick.

"Or with that coloured face," said Doris.

"And living at the top of the house—and keeping rabbits and things—that doesn't seem quite as it ought to, you know."

"Not but what I should like to see the blackbirds and the canary-birds," Doris admitted.

"Oh, I shouldn't mind looking at the magpies and the rabbits," Nick said, loftily. "Still, I should say that old fellow was rather cracked."

They were glad, however, to partake of the cake, with which Mr. Leveridge had filled my pockets. Having consumed it, they arrived at a more flattering opinion in regard to him. And they took me into favour again; and were amused listeners while I repeated, with further particulars, the story of my adventures.

"All the same, I wouldn't get lost again if I were you, Buppy," said Doris.

"No; you must stick close to us another time. Then no harm can come to you," Nick said, with grand confidence.

It afterwards appeared that Mr. Leveridge was, in truth, Nick's godfather, the fact not being regarded as of importance, however. A silver cup, bestowed upon Nick at his christening, in recognition of the conventional obligations of godfathers, had long since disappeared, with other articles of plate, probably during some visitation of adversity, such as our family had too often been afflicted with.

It was understood that my father had relations in the north of England, who, if they were forbearing in regard to the assistance they rendered him, yet did not fail to help him upon occasion. But certainly they waited until the very last moment, before they intervened with assistance. My father's faith in the proverb, setting forth that amendment may always be looked for when things are quite at their worst, was, perhaps, thus to be

accounted for. Of these kindred of ours we really saw little or nothing. They thought it as well, perhaps, to keep out of our way; for in their minds we were associated with demands upon their pockets. They did not visit London, or if they did, they did not avail themselves of that opportunity to call upon my father, and make our acquaintance. My father wrote to them at intervals, especially when his affairs had arrived at the point of extreme embarrassment. And sometimes he received replies from his relations in the north, and oftentimes he didn't. When money was remitted, I need hardly say, it was very promptly expended. My father's liabilities were numerous and considerable; the wants of his household many, urgent, and forever increasing.

The back dining-room was called my father's office. Our house was wofully shabby, altogether, but this was its most comfortable chamber. Other of the rooms indeed were in a dismantled condition, wholly barren of furniture. The office had a well-worn look; the carpet was threadbare, but it had been a Turkey carpet; the leather chairs were frayed and torn, still they were decidedly easy-chairs, shaped by long use to fit the concavities and convexities of the human form. A baize door kept out the draught effectually, and with a fire burning in the grate, and the lamp lighted, its flame shielded by a green shade, the office had really an attractive aspect. Here my father sat very constantly, surrounded by papers, letters, plans and sketches—these covered his table and even littered the floor. The ceiling was cracked and clouded, the walls discoloured, the window-panes thickly crusted with grime; upon all sides dust and "blacks" found abiding-places; neglect, uncleanness and untidiness, certainly characterised the room; but the office was very precious in my father's eyes. It signified to him peace and comfort: sitting in dressing-gown and slippers, with rumpled hair and unclothed neck, and indulging his passion for architectural day-dreaming.

We were told, one day, that there was a gentleman with papa. The information stirred our curiosity. Nick held me up, so that I might peer through an oval window in the green-baize door, and report the result. But we managed clumsily between us, somehow. I was unsteady, and Nick lost his balance. We bumped heavily

against the door, which opening, suffered us to fall into the room, almost at the feet of a stranger, sitting opposite my father, but at some distance from his table.

"Ay, ay," said my father, not in the least disturbed by our abrupt entrance. "Don't be frightened. Come in. This is your uncle Isaac, who's very glad to see you."

"Very glad, indeed," said the stranger, smiling, and patting us on the head.

CURRENT COIN.

THE circulating medium, hard cash, which has been well described as the life-blood of commerce, was but ill understood among the ancients. The precious metals, among which in the world's youth were included copper and brass, passed chiefly by weight from the treasure-chest of one possessor to the coffer of another. To look back very far, indeed, the three great empires—Assyria, Babylon, Egypt—were essentially uncommercial. A gorgeous despot, absolute master of the lands, lives, and liberties of millions of docile cultivators, has no sympathies with trade, save to tax it. The Egypt which Abraham entered was as well provided with custom-house officers as the France of Louis the Superb; but the Nile-realm of the Pharaohs was not an exporting country. It was not until the Ptolemies had brought Greek blood and Greek fashions into the Delta, that money was coined in Alexandria. Even in stirring Athens, where ships were underwritten, as at Lloyd's, and bubble companies started, as in our own City, money was more talked of than seen. The treasures, the heaps of shining specie and glittering bullion lay hidden in crypts, or in the penetralia of such temples as were in high repute for sanctity. There was a good deal of sheer barter, of crude exchange of Syrian slaves for Thracian wheat, in the metropolis of Hellenic wit and wisdom.

Even in Rome the familiar table of the money-changer required shears and pincers, weights and scales, and these last were in constant requisition. Small coins existed in profusion, but large payments were made by the help of the balance. The coins mentioned in the New Testament were the denarius or eightpenny piece, closely corresponding with the Austrian zwanziger; the as, or "penny," of the intrinsic value of threepence; and the

assarium, or mite. But the pieces of silver that formed the price of the treachery of Judas were probably the old Jewish shekels, worth a shilling and sevenpence, and, therefore, nearly on a par with the guilder, or Dutch florin. The sesterce, or silver twopence, with its multiples, may be found wherever Roman aqueducts or villas have stood; but the splendid golden aureus, like the kindred stater of Macedonia, never attained so wide a circulation. Very ancient is the ring-money of the Gothic and Scandinavian tribes, a species of coinage that was known in Britain also, and in which bracelets and other ornaments passed current, like strings of wampum among the Red Men of North America.

In England, the royal mints of Egbert, Athelstan, and Alfred sent forth an extensive and systematic coinage of silver. Besides the massive shilling and the heavy thrimsa, there was the penny, succeeded by halfpings and feorthlings, also of silver, and supplemented by sticas, or styes, of brass or copper. The shilling, or sterling, like the broad crownpiece of a later day, was too ponderous a coin for ordinary dealings; but the penny, deeply indented on its reverse with the sign of the cross, was the old and tried favourite of the public. It could easily be broken into halves or quarters, and the facility for giving change, which was thus afforded, was no light merit in a rude age, while its purchasing power, as compared with the bronze or copper penny of our own time, was enormously great. Many a horn of nut-brown ale, many a slice of beef and manchet of fine white wheaten bread, could be bought for a silver penny in the days before the Conquest. The silver halfpenny and farthing held their ground till 1560, when they were definitively replaced by copper, and at about the same time groats and half-groats equally dropped into disuse.

The gold coins, in circulation in feudal England, were more often minted abroad than at home. The byzants came from Constantinople, the sequins from the haughty Republic of Venice, the angels from a Florentine die. The noble, however, which still traditionally lingers in the attorney's six-and-eightpence, was of insular origin, while the gold florin had its birthplace, as the name implies, beside the Arno. Henry the Eighth coined sovereigns and half-sovereigns of the modern value; but, throughout the

Tudor and Stuart reigns, a preference was shown, both in France and England, for the finer gold of Spain, the pistole, the doubloon, the joe, and for the weighty yellow moidore of Portugal. Bluff Harry, who sought to turn all sources of wealth into the royal exchequer, did not neglect so obvious a means of profit as the debasement of the coinage. The process had, indeed, been going on ever since the battle of Hastings. The Norman conqueror found the English mint sending forth weighty shillings, twenty to the pound. A pound sterling meant a pound of pure silver at that day. Sixty-six shillings are now coined from the same lump which yielded but twenty under Edward the Confessor. Money has dwindled and diminished, literally as well as metaphorically.

Cruel and barbarous punishments did not prove sufficiently deterrent, to warn off trespassers on the king's peculiar preserves of gold and silver. The Tom Tiddler's ground of royalty was perpetually infested by the manufacturers and the passers-off of base coin. More numerous still were the clippers, who shaved a fragment of silver from testoon and dollar, so that a coin which had been long in circulation came to resemble a cheese, slowly disappearing under the microscopic jaws of innumerable mites. The scourge, the branding-iron, the cropping of ears, the halter, thinned the ranks of these miserable parasites on a wealthy society, but did not put an end to a lucrative profession. That a rogue, caught plying file and nippers on His Grace's coin, should be nailed to the pillory, pelted by a British populace accustomed to cock-throwing on Shrove Tuesdays, and flung afterwards to starve in the "bare" of the Fleet or the "little ease" of Newgate, was the merest matter of course. Old offenders had the grim alternative of Tyburn, the cart, the rope, the hasty burial. It may be doubted if, when the welcome newsletter was read aloud in country houses to bright-eyed young damsels and manly, pink-faced lads, all alike curious for tidings of London life, one shudder was caused by the cool announcement that "three men were hanged and a woman burned," for the crime of passing off counterfeit money.

The most remarkable instance of the gradual depreciation of coinage, while the old name was retained, is afforded by the Turkish piastre. A fanciful analogy might be traced between the mighty and

encroaching empire swayed by Solymán the Magnificent and the broad and weighty coin, imitated from the Spanish dollar, which then issued from the Stamboul mint. Europe now stands in no awe of the Ottoman arms, while the little piece of dull pewter that is called a piastre can barely pass for twopence English, and has to be measured like grain, and paid away in sacksful at a time. Strange prejudices, founded on local custom, often affect the relative potency of money to purchase goods or labour. In many parts of Scotland the greasiest one-pound note is preferred to the brightest sovereign, wet from the mint. In Austria, or at least in the more remote districts of Hungary, Croatia, and Carinthia, gold is regarded with sullen suspicion by a population familiar from infancy with the touch and sight of bank-notes for infinitesimal amounts; while silver, on the other hand, is greeted with respectful delight, and is hoarded, rather than expended, even by the poorest. The Abyssinians, who insisted not merely on Austrian dollars, but on dollars bearing the image and superscription of the Empress Maria Theresa, merely exaggerated the dislike which was entertained by the French peasant of twenty years ago, for the gold coinage that replaced the ponderous five-franc pieces, the finger-ing of which conveyed so substantial a sense of wealth to the lucky holder.

Current money has been sometimes a work of art, beautiful in itself; sometimes a mere embodiment of valuable ugliness. Some of the Greek and Roman coins, clear-cut and exquisite of design, rather resemble glittering portraits of fair-faced princes, than the mere instruments of barter. Others are plain, useful, unpretending, and a few are hideous. There is a curious contrast between the old English crownpiece, with its spirited representation of St. George and the Dragon, and the almost ostentatious homeliness of the modern florin. The English guinea, though coined of as fine yellow gold as ever was washed from the sand of African rivers, and, as such, greedily bought up by foreigners, cut but a poor figure beside the better-executed coins of Louis the Fifteenth, or the productions of the Spanish mint. Some of the heads of the first Napoleon, especially those on the double louis, or pieces of forty francs, are not unworthy of comparison with even the coins of Macedonia.

The twenty years' warfare against France

that signalled the end of the last and the beginning of the present century, reduced our grandfathers to their wits' end as regarded money. Despite the enormous cost of the war and the load of taxes, the country was rich; but actual, tangible coin was not easy to come by. As for gold, it was hunted for and sought after until, like the bustard or the raven, it came very near to being improved off the face of our island. A stray guinea was pounced upon like food in time of famine. Every red-coated guard of a mail-coach kept as bright a look-out for the yellow "pictures of George" as he did for highwaymen. There was a commission to buy them up for Government at almost any price, at seven or eight and twenty shillings sometimes, when my Lord Wellington's army was fighting and paying its way in Spain, and barrels and barrels of gold had to be shipped weekly to the Peninsula. On the other hand, secret emissaries of the dreaded Corsican were at work on English ground, bribing or cajoling every old crone to part with the precious coins, that lay hidden in teapot or worsted stocking. Even hanging could not deter the more desperate smugglers from launching the "guinea-boat," painted white to be the less discernible at sea, and pulling towards where, contrary to the king, his crown, and his dignity, the French luggers awaited them to carry off the English gold to Parisian melting-pots and the Imperial stamp.

Very prominent as a resource for supplementing the deficient coinage of the state, during the long struggle against Napoleon, was the issue, by private firms or corporations, of tokens. Many of these, designed to alleviate the difficulty of procuring small change sufficient for domestic trade, were in sheer weight of copper, as well as in elaborate execution, far superior to the old penny. A good many shillings and sixpences, worn to thin discs of metal for the most part, floated about the country, but silver, as well as gold, was in hot demand for the needs of the gigantic military expenditure, and the main reliance of the nation was on the promises to pay various sums, from one pound to a thousand pounds, which the old lady of Threadneedle-street poured forth with so lavish a liberality. This, after all, was as nothing to the monetary famine under which Revolutionary France had suffered but a few years before. John Bull, though he grumbled as he buttoned his many-

caped greatcoat over the pocket-book bursting with the one-pound notes of the period, was well off when compared with the Parisian who paid his eighteen hundred francs in paper for a modest breakfast in the *ci-devant* Palais-Royal, and who was thankful to receive in coin one twentieth part of the nominal value of his detested assignats. To this hour there exist holders of the worthless bank-notes of the Convention and the Directory, who cling to their obsolete claims on a departed Government, as tenaciously as certain Moorish families are said to treasure up the title-deeds and the gate-keys of their ancestral mansions in Seville and Granada.

No country has ever been found to possess so intrinsically pure a coinage as that of India, previous to its subjection to the British rule. To this day, a sort of fanciful value attaches to the magnificent gold mohur, so soft that it could be bent by the fingers, or scratched by the nail, while the silver sicca rupee long held its ground against the Company's rupee, with its slight admixture of alloy. The practice of having coins and ornaments of absolutely pure gold and silver had its good as well as its bad side. No doubt the trinkets were easily defaced, the coin quickly injured by friction. But then the natives of India have always found it convenient to convert coin into bangles and nose-rings, or to exchange these latter for coin, at will, and with the minimum of loss. A Hindoo ryot has but to carry a bag of silver to a jeweller, and on paying the cost of the labour, he procures its transformation into anklets and armlets for his wife and daughters; possibly, in some rare instances of bucolic ostentation, into silver tyres for the wheels of his ox-cart. He has no doubt of the substantial value of the property which he thus oddly invests. For in India it is not as with us at home, where jewellery is dear to buy, but cheap to sell; where costly rings and bracelets are with difficulty disposed of at the most alarming of sacrifices, and where many a reduced gentlewoman has listened with semi-incredulous indignation to the contemptuous estimate by which Messrs. Snap and Pinchbeck gauge the worth of the "family pearls"—hereditary gems which she had been from infancy accustomed to regard as second only to those of royalty itself. The Hindoo customer knows that his pure gold and pure silver will always command their just price,

while he learns the selling value of a ruby or an emerald with at least approximate accuracy.

Africa, a continent naturally destitute, so far as is known, of silver, has always been driven to strange expedients for a currency. In the Soudan, where an elephant's tusk represents so many able-bodied slaves—where a certain number of strips of cloth are equal to a calabash filled with beads or buttons—and a bean-pod, brimming with gold-dust, does duty for a bank-note, small change is urgently required. This want is partially supplied by those little white shells called "cowries," which are found on the coast of India, and are often there used to adorn the horse-trappings of princes. In Angola, and other parts of central Africa, these same cowries—two thousand five hundred of which, in India, are the equivalent of one rupee, and are the pocket-money of native children of the poorest caste—rise to the value of five thousand to the pound sterling. Except in Egypt and Morocco, no money is coined in Africa north of the Cape of Good Hope.

It is wonderful that so highly-organised and commercial a community as that of wealthy China, should have contentedly remained so ill off in a monetary point of view. The Flowery Land, in this anomaly, as in others, has probably been enslaved by the tyranny of custom. Those long strings of perforated copper-coin, technically called "cash," have been, for centuries untold, the only recognised money of the central kingdom; and even now, although the indigenous taels and tungsteens are largely supplemented by Spanish and Mexican dollars, a Chinese merchant prefers to make payments of silver, not by tael or by weight, but by measure. China, like India, no doubt, contains a large proportion of the whole stock of the precious metals; but its absorbent qualities are so great, that what was anciently called the balance of trade is nearly sure to be against the outer barbarians.

The barbaric practice of hoarding—the despair of many a financier—still flourishes among the inhabitants of the most populous regions of Asia, and can never be without some influence on the European money-market. In despotic countries, or in troubled times, coin disappears from sight, as surely as the mercury in the barometer shrinks at the approach of a storm. It is natural that

poor Hussein, the Persian peasant, or poor Mourad, the Turkish cultivator, should grope his way into the garden on a moonless night, his spade tucked under his trembling arm, to bury the precious pitcher full of hard-earned coin. Were he known to have money in the house, he would be cruelly squeezed by pasha or mirza, would "eat stick," and have soldiers billeted upon him, and be summoned before the cadi, to answer for some half-forgotten crime, of which he faintly remembers to have heard his grandfather talk, as the children ate curds and pancake around the winter brazier of charcoal. It is for the same reason that Eastern houses—instead of, as peaceful European villas are wont to do, turning their plate-glass windows, and glistening conservatories, and stuccoed fronts, towards the street—present to the inquisitive eye a dead wall, mean, squalid, uninviting. Behind that unsightly screen there may possibly be a pleasance full of sparkling, bubbling fountains, of smooth lawns, of blossomed shrubs, of huge vases, in which bloom a very "dilkoosha" of roses. Very probably there does exist a suite or two of sumptuously-furnished rooms, well provided with gay furniture of silk and silver, gorgeous with gilding and colours, replete with costly toys; but concealed, like the ladies of the harem themselves, from the perilous prying of those in authority.

England has probably been, during the historical period, the country in which hoarding was the least practised. At all events, since the time of Stephen and Matilda, war has not been made, south of the Tweed, in the ruthless, reckless way common on the Continent before Waterloo. The wise Burgundian statesman, Philip de Comines, has recorded his admiring wonder at the lenity with which the internecine strife of the Red and White Roses was carried on. He, who had been used to see both sides harry the country with ferocious impartiality, and who had often tracked the march of friend or enemy by the charred ruins of hamlets and the trampled corn-crops, marvelled at the good behaviour of the Yorkist and Lancastrian. He found that in English domestic warfare the outrages were few and partial, whereas in France and Flanders the belligerents fell like wolves on the unfortunate peasantry and townsfolk, and were only repelled by the bristling ramparts and mercenary troops of the great

cities. As much might justly have been said of the conduct of the great Civil War between king and parliament, while in peaceful days no English ruler could mulct and grind the people, as was done by the governors and lieutenants of the despotic monarchs of France and Spain. It is but recently that the savings of the French peasants have been tempted forth by the lure of high interest on Government security, and even now there exist in every village ancient Sir Oracles in blouse and sabots, who shake their gray heads in pity for the man who does not keep his darling gold pieces, as they emphatically phrase it, "in the shade." The only bank in which these economists trust, is the earth beneath the mildewed flooring of the farmhouse cellar.

Many of the antique coinages of Europe have been extinguished within living memory. Tourists in Switzerland, travellers in Italy, are freed from the perplexities into which batzen and carline, rappen and pauls, baiocchi and liras, were perpetually throwing them. Even the complicated monetary systems of Germany are being gradually simplified, and marks banco, stivers, and maravedis are things of the past. Gone, too, are the Irish and Manx coins, the precise value of which has sorely perturbed many a soldier freshly landed on the shores of Mona or Erin, while the continued rise in prices has eliminated from circulation sundry infinitesimal pieces of money, the multiples of which survive in common parlance. No doubt but that a Turk of Sultan Achmet's reign could buy something—a fish, say, from the Sea of Marmora, or a half-dozen of luscious figs from some garden on the Bosphorus—for a single asper, long an imaginary coin. The para, that tiny, fish-shaped scrap of base metal, is fast becoming as mythical as its tiny predecessor, or as the milree of Brazil, the English mite, the liard of France. When nothing can be bought for one of these Lilliputian life-drops of the financial circulation, it naturally loses the ultimate reason of its existence. The relative cheapness of a country may be guessed by the lowness of its humblest unit, as regards coinage. Thus Belgium and Germany, where a real centime, a real kreutzer, a genuine silbergroschen, can be seen and handled, are certainly more thrifty and economical than France, where the half sou is at the bottom of the fiscal ladder. One curious result of the opening-up of Japan

to Western commerce was the discovery of a land, in which, thanks to a persistent policy of isolation, silver retained its relative value with respect to gold, as in the days of our own Edward the Third, and was utterly unaffected by the great supplies of bullion which America has sent across the Atlantic. The difference was as thirteen to one as compared to sixteen to one, and large gains were realised by the fortunate few who were the pioneers of traffic at Nagasaki. The square or oblong gold and silver itzabues of Japan have very little similarity to either Asiatic or European coins. With respect to the amount of coined money in existence, it has been roughly calculated that the mines of the New World, during the three centuries succeeding the discovery of America, about doubled the Old World's stock of the precious metals, with a preponderance in favour of silver; while, since then, Australia and California have poured their yellow store into the market, cheapening money, and enhancing the cost of other commodities. A great and increasing proportion of these supplies, however, is absorbed in the industrial arts, and it has been reckoned that out of every three ounces of the virgin ore extracted from the mine, only one ever enters the doors of a mint, or undergoes the apotheosis of being converted into current coin.

LET IT BE.

Let be the river! What does it avail
To struggle with the current's destined course?
The strongest effort does but faint and fail,
Skill yields, out-tired, to resistless force.
The highest rock is overleapt by spray,
The silent waters fret each bar away.
Vainly the bulwark fashioned deep and wide,
New bed contrived, new turn by cunning wrought;
Steady, resistless, onward flows the tide,
Each gathering wave with gathering purpose
fraught,
Till, full and free, rejoicing in its strength,
It sweeps to ocean's mighty arms at length.
Let be the river! Let the loved alone
To meet the fate, and shape the circumstance.
We dream the future, fancying all our own,
What does but wait the call of time and chance;
Foredoomed, the path before the pilgrim lies,
The sunset lurking in the morning skies.
Let be the river! Hail its rippling smile,
Listen its song, and shiver to its sigh;
Let its chafed beauty weary hours beguile,
Watch how it darkens to the darkening sky;
We cannot cloud or brighten, speed or check,
Nor alter on its way the tiniest beck.
Let be the river then! Where lilies float,
And blue forget-me-nots beside it shimmer,
Take gladness in its suns' reflected mote,
And soothing from its moonlights' dreamy glimmer;
Happy if still your faltering footsteps tend
Beside its varying currents to the end!

MR. MARSTON'S FOLLY.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

It had been sorely against the will of his aunt, who kindly kept both him and his house in order, that Mr. Marston had given himself this holiday at all. Every tone and inflection of the voice, in which she had worded her protest against his "gadding up to London by himself, wasting his time and his money," rang in his ears now, as he moodily made his evening toilet, preparatory to escorting some ladies to the theatre. "Aunt Matilda will be furious when she hears what a fool I've made of myself," he reminded himself, hopelessly; "and how shall I ever look Ada in the face, after taking a step that may drive her from the only home she has ever known? I'd better have blown my brains out, than have got myself into this mess."

The victim of this miserable burst of self-reproach was a fine, good-looking, prosperous gentleman of about thirty-eight. A wealthy bachelor, he had been aimed at repeatedly by young ladies of every degree, in that portion of Midlandshire in which his property was situated. But Aunt Matilda had always kept a sharp look-out on the daughters of the land; and boldly as some of them had tried for him, his devoted relative had invariably courageously rushed between him and the danger. She had guarded him at every point; and, oddly enough, he never resented her rather pronounced system of protection, but, on the contrary, was grateful for it in his quiet way; though once or twice some girl, with a fairer face than the rest, had taught him to feel that The Brooks would be a sweeter home to him, if his own wife presided there.

But the danger, that she had averted so skilfully from befalling him under the shadow of his own roof-tree, had overtaken him in a ghastly form now. He had come up to London a free man, and now he was fettered; and, new as his fetters were, he felt that they were ignominious. He had been led, or driven rather, into forming an engagement from which his judgment, taste, and pride revolted. That he had no one to blame but himself for this unhappy result of his folly, was no consolation to him whatever. He had been a fool, and he knew it, and knew too that the world would let him see that it deemed him one. But he could face the world's opinion, he believed.

The thought that quelled his spirit, and made him rage against those who had laid a trap for him, was the thought of his cousin Ada. He could look forward with tolerable calmness to the volley of remonstrances that his Aunt Matilda would fire off at him. But when the vision of Ada arose before him—when he pictured her standing in one of her thousand graceful attitudes, her little head held aloft in haughty wonder at what he had done—he quailed, and declared to himself that his punishment would be greater than he could bear.

"Engaged to my landlady's daughter—pledged to make the daughter of an illiterate lodging-house keeper Mrs. Marston," he groaned dismally. "I should have scorned a boy who could walk into such a trap with his eyes open." Then he looked at himself, and the blood rose freely to his forehead, and he knew that as he blushed to meet his own eyes, so would he blush whenever the eyes of his fellow-men fell upon him after his folly had become public.

He turned impatiently as the sound of his own name, uttered in an affectedly jaunty tone, fell upon his ears, and muttering something that was not complimentary to the person addressing him, he hurried downstairs to the drawing-room where his future bride awaited him, nestling timidly the while under her mother's wing.

One glance at the two women, and the whole story is revealed! The mother—coarse, handsome in a blowsy way; keenly alive to the main chance; watchful; alternately fawningly humble and confidentially intimate in her demeanour; florid in her dress; and endowed with a voice that gave one the impression of going on for ever, when it once began rolling out its badly-punctuated sentences. The daughter—pretty, shy; arrayed in cheap and flimsy imitation of the magnificently-draped models that adorn the pages of *Le Follet* and *The Queen*; coquettish and conceited. There they stood, these two feminine spiders, waiting for the luckless fly whom they have lured into their web.

That he is a gentleman, that he has lived an honourable, manly, straightforward, blameless life, has availed him nothing. He has been taken in the toils, and the honour he has prized so highly has been made the instrument of his downfall.

The sad old story repeated itself in his case. He had come to the house of this social brigand in good faith, meaning to

pay for the rooms he used and the food he ate, and neither knowing nor desiring to know aught of the woman or her belongings. And she, finding him guileless and chivalrous, wealthy and generous, had contrived to fasten an appearance of intimacy with, and interest in, her daughter upon him. The piano "happened" to be in the drawing-room, and Harriet always "happened" to be playing it when he came in. To his sorrow he asked her to stay and play on, two or three times, and then her mother bore down upon him with the accusation that he had compromised her only child's reputation by his carelessness, and won her ewe lamb's heart by his kindness. "Was he a man or a monster?" she asked, so loudly that the servants heard her. "Was her Harriet the sport of an idle villain, or the object of an honest gentleman's honourable intentions?" Bah! it is hard to write the details of the story! It is hateful to trace the outlines of the coarse web which such women as these weave for men. The tale of how he was trapped shall be told briefly. "Harriet's character was gone," her mother averred, "unless he showed himself to be a man as had the courage to come forward like a man, and save a girl who was as good as gold and pure as an angel, from having undeserved stones cast at her. The neighbours had got hold of something," she declared, "and poor Harriet couldn't pass outside the door without having heads tossed at her." The poor gentleman, whose aunt had protected him from the evil designs of the young women of his own class, was helpless now! He had never wronged a woman by thought, word, or deed, in his life. The Marstons bore a stainless name in their county; no suspicion of low intrigue had ever attached to them; and here now, he, the head of the house, was charged with having "compromised" a poor, little, inoffensive, virtuous girl, who had no father or brother to defend her from her aspersers. It was a terrible dilemma; he shrank from offering them the poor reparation of money (had he but known how eagerly Mrs. Warren would have grasped it for herself and her Harriet, he might have made himself a free and happy man again); and so, one day when Mrs. Warren had cried at him copiously for an hour or two, he took the fatal step, and said if it was the only compensation he could offer Harriet, he supposed he must offer it. "Would she

become his wife, on this clear understanding: that it would be an unequal marriage—that he felt it to be so—and that to the best of his belief unequal marriages were never happy ones?"

She would become his wife, undoubtedly she would, and "the sooner the better," her mother added. She cared nothing for the inequality, less, if possible, for his lukewarm anticipations of wedded bliss. The pretty, pert, underbred, affectedly-simple little actress was in an earthly paradise from the moment Mr. Marston spoke. She panted to trot him out for the inspection of her uncles, who kept emporiums of various sorts in divers obscure corners of our great metropolis. She longed to show him to "the young ladies" in whose society she had murdered the meaning of divers dramatists. But he drew the line at these would-be manifestations of himself to his betrothed's circle, and tried to teach her that he was not going to marry all her relations and acquaintance.

The delicacy of his nature prompted him to propose leaving the house, as soon as he had asked the girl to be his wife; but Mrs. Warren dreaded her bird taking temporary flight, and prayed him, "as a mother," so urgently to remain with them, until his family knew of the step he had taken, that he laid his scruples by, and stayed on, trying, unsuccessfully, to get fond of the girl he was going to marry. In herself she was gentle and unexact; affectionate, shy, awkward in the society of her superiors in station, and good-looking, with that beauty of youth, not a trace of which remains when youth is fled.

It was wearisome work to the well-placed country gentleman to sit in the little, arid, conventional, London lodging-house drawing-room, in the society of the little cockney whose knowledge of pleasurable life was based upon occasional dubiously complimentary dinners at the expense of doubtfully reputable young men, and a few happy days at the Arcadian resorts which border the river. It was more irksome still to act as the escort of herself and her mother to dramatic representations, none of which were fraught with the painful interest that recently attached itself to his own life history. She was pretty and modest, and perfectly presentable in her own class. He felt that he should have admired, and liked, and respected her if the choice of his head-gardener or groom had fallen upon her. But as the queen of his

domain, as the wife of his bosom, as the mother of the Marstons of the next generation!—"I ought to have been sent to Hanwell," he told himself with a groan as he thought of what the future had in store for him.

It was an appalling ordeal that through which he had to pass, even before he went back to Midlandshire and bruted about the pitiable story of his own degradation. Friends and acquaintances of his own class would not abstain from visiting places of public amusement, simply because it was painful to Bernard Marston to be seen in the company of a girl who was as pure as an angel, but who was no more in place in his society than his gamekeeper or housemaid would have been. It was altogether a superfluous work, on her mother's part, that which she gave herself when she tried to instil the belief into him that "Harriet had always been quite the lady." He knew she was not that sweetest product of nature and civilisation—a gentlewoman; and he did dread the dawning of the day that should show her to Ada, and show him what Ada thought of it all.

That this day was not very far distant, was made clear to his understanding on this very night, on which he has been introduced to you. Mrs. Warren enjoyed the play thoroughly herself; she had never been to one under such comfortable conditions before. She also enjoyed the supper in Mr. Marston's room afterwards, for she had ordered it herself, and had taken care that the viands she loved were largely represented at the feast. But, after the supper was over, the maternal visage, that had been jovial for hours, grew set and stern. The time had "come for business," she said, "and would he mind Harriet's going to bed, after she had mixed her (Mrs. Warren) a little drop of 'ot gin-and-water?"

He did not mind the business; he did not mind libations of hot gin-and-water being poured before Mrs. Warren's thirsty shrine; he did not even demur at Harriet's departure. In fact he was resigned to the worst this woman could do to him now. The "worst?"—had she not done her worst already? There could be no lower abyss than this to the edge of which she had lured and driven him.

"You had something to say to me," he remarked suggestively, when Harriet had left them. Mrs. Warren was slowly sipping her beverage, driving him mad nearly by her unctuous enjoyment of its

heat, and sweetness, and strength. He pictured his mother-in-law in the softly-lighted, flower-bedecked drawing-room at The Brooks. She, with her tumbler in her hand, and a smile of the transient pleasure gin-and-water sometimes seems to impart to those who sip it, would be a strange pendant to Ada singing at the piano, or bending over her embroidery-frame. Then he thought of how his wife would look, and speak, and act when they all came to be together during the long winter evenings down at The Brooks, and so it was with an impatient look and tone that he said:

"You had something to say to me?"

"Well, lor! it has to be said, and what I say is when a thing have to be done, why do it, Mr. Marston, and no mock-modesty about it; I've no one but myself to stand up for me and Harriet, and I don't want no one to do it; when I have to speak I can speak, no one better; and what I ask you now is, when's the wedding to be? The neighbours is asking questions already, and I'll have no questions asked about my child. When's the wedding to be?"

She passed her glass from one hand to the other, with a force and vigour that made him think, for a moment, that she was about to apply the empty right one to his ears.

"You can hardly expect me to take an interest in any questions your neighbours may ask," he said coldly. "I have many arrangements to carry out before I can think of marrying; my aunt and cousin may not think it desirable to remain at The Brooks when I take a wife there, and until they are settled——"

"Now I tell you what it is, Mr. Marston," Mrs. Warren interrupted, inspired by the maternal spirit, and the refreshment in which she had been indulging. "I'm quite of the opinion that it won't be desirable for your aunt and cousin to remain at The Brooks; I don't 'old with aunts and cousins; but I'm not a-going to have their comfort and convenience studied before my child. Harriet's the one I have to look to, and the one you have to look to, and what I want from you now is a plain answer to a plain question. When's the wedding to be?"

"You had better consult Harriet," he constrained himself to answer.

"She's that gentle and retirin', that she'd say, 'Don't 'urry him, ma'; I can wait.' I know what she is; but I'm not going to have no waiting and no shilly-

shallying. If your relations like to come and be pleasant and agreeable, I'll give them as good a breakfast as ever they sat down to; and if they like to give themselves airs and stay away, they're welcome to do that. You owe it to my daughter to make her your wife as soon as you can after having got her spoken about; and short reckonings make long friends, Mr. Marston. So the earlier day you names the better for us, I'm thinking."

"It may be when you like," he said gloomily; and she, having finished her gin-and-water and carried her point, got up jauntily, and good-humouredly assured him that it "should all be arranged for that day fortnight," and left him with the dread conviction in his mind that he must break the tidings to his aunt and cousin as soon as possible.

Never since the pot-hook stage had he so bungled with pen, ink, and paper as he did the following day, when he sat down to write to those women at home who worshipped him, and whose worship was accompanied by the incense of refinement. After dozens of vain endeavours to lead up to the point easily, he gave up the attempt to do anything more than put the bald fact before them in all its ugliness.

"MY DEAR AUNT," he wrote. "Will Ada and you wish me well when I tell you that I am going to be married? The young lady is a Miss Warren—a pretty, kind-hearted girl, of whom I trust you will both try to be fond, as she is very much attached to me. I need not request that the house shall be set in order, as its order is always perfect; nor will I ask you to attend the ceremony—which takes place in a fortnight—as it will be very quiet. There will be a little talk and a few inquiries made in the neighbourhood, I suppose; but no one knows better than you do how to quell gossip. Ask Ada to write me a kind word. Your affectionate nephew,
BERNARD."

When Mrs. Rippon read this missive from her affectionate nephew, she was as one bereft of reason for a few minutes. Not that she exhibited symptoms of dementia in a violent way, but that her intelligence refused to grasp the facts. The letter met her as she was passing through the hall after breakfast, just as she was about to make her usual gracious progress through the kingdom of which she was queen regent. She read it, and faltered back to the sofa in the dining-room, and then read it again, and huddled

it away as Ada came up to her, and pitifully tried to persuade herself that it was a dream.

"That's from Bernard, isn't it, mamma?" Ada said, dispelling the illusion; "when is our dear old boy coming home? The horses are getting unmanageable, and cub-hunting has begun, and I want him; he must come back!"

She seated herself by her mother as she spoke, and in perfect faith held her hand out for the letter of the man whom—without analysing the feeling—she felt to be her own in every way. Her own cousin, her own friend, her own playmate, companion, master, slave; everything, in fact, that it is pleasant for a woman to feel that a man is to her. And at this display of confidence and trust in one who had proved himself so utterly untrustworthy, Mrs. Rippon gave up the delusion of its being a dream, and looked the painful reality in the face.

"The letter will shock you, so that I hardly dare to let you see it," Ada calmly took it from her mother's hand. "Can you comprehend such egregious folly? Can you credit that Bernard can have been so weak? This must have been the work of some dreadful, designing woman."

"Oh, Bernard must be very much in love," Ada put in quietly; "don't fret and distress yourself about it, mamma dear, I know that it's only because it's new to you that you feel hurt; but other people may think you're disappointed, unless you show you're as glad at Bernard's marriage as you ought to be, if he's happy."

All this Ada said as brightly and unemotionally as if her heart were not aching the while. All this she said with as superb an affectation of belief in "Bernard being very much in love," as if she were not reading clearly in his letter his confession of failure, and outcry of self-condemnation. But when she had said it, and got herself safely away out of the observation of everybody, she let her sorrow come to the fore in a way that is familiar to most girls. She shed some bitter tears over the downfall of a hope, which she had been unconscious of entertaining, until Bernard's letter taught her that now indeed all possibility of his ever loving her, with any other love than that brotherly affection, which he had so freely proffered her all her life, was over.

"We must go from here!" This was her first thought. Her second was: "And we must go in such a way as will not hurt

him, and will not betray to anybody that I am foolish enough to feel anything but pleasure about the change that ought to be for Bernard's happiness. Oh! if mamma will only not speak—not ask me anything—not look as if she pitied me, and felt enraged with Bernard, because—because he has found someone he loves better than me!"

Then the girl reminded herself that the fact of her remaining apart from her mother, at this juncture, might lead the household to speculate as to the reason why she did so. So, being as proud as she was loving, she hurriedly arrayed herself in hat and habit; gave the order, as usual, for her horse to be brought round for her morning's ride; and then joined her mother for a few minutes in the morning-room, where that unhappy lady was striving to find a flaw in her perfect system of managing the house accounts.

"I am just going out, mamma dear," Ada began in a blithe tone, and with a beating heart. "Would you like me to call at the Blakes and the vicarage, and tell them about Bernard?"

"How can you—you, of all people, be in a hurry to publish it?" Mrs. Rippon answered with irritation. "Is the subject such a pleasant one, that you pine to discuss it before it's forced upon you? Some low adventuress has got hold of him, or he would have been more explicit about her; and The Brooks will be no home for us when she comes here; I feel sure of that."

"So do I feel sure of that, mamma," Ada said quite cheerfully. "A young wife ought to reign alone."

"You can't know what you're talking about, Ada," Mrs. Rippon replied tearfully. Though she had herself suggested that she and Ada must depart from The Brooks when the new régime set in, it exasperated her, more than she could express, that Ada should take the departure so entirely for granted. She wanted her decision to be appealed against. She longed to hear indignant protests uttered, by all who knew her, about the short-sighted barbarity of the man to whom she had been as a brother, and who rewarded her devotion by what she regarded as a dire piece of deception. Moreover, much as she might rage against the new order of things, she knew her nephew well enough to feel sure that a residence under his roof would always be a pleasanter one for her than a residence elsewhere.

"We must go, mamma, and go pleasantly, as if we were grateful to Bernard for his long course of kindness to us; not resentfully, as if we fancied he had no right to bring home a wife to his own house; and if he has the shadow of a doubt as to the wisdom of his choice," the girl added, with a sob, "let us try to dispel the shadow, and make the kindest, noblest, most honourable gentleman in the world feel that his own people have his happiness at heart."

And with that she went out of the room; and, as her mother watched her trotting down the avenue, that mother may be forgiven for feeling bitterly against the man who "had gone out of his way to gather a weed, when such a rose was blooming in his garden."

But for all the strength her bitter feeling imparted to her, she was powerless to cope with Ada's will, in the matter of the tone to be taken by themselves in the neighbourhood relative to their kinsman's marriage. It is true that keen-sighted outsiders detected the grim dislike which Mrs. Rippon entertained for the unknown bride. But never a word expressive of the feeling was heard to pass her lips. It is true, also, that others fancied sometimes that Ada's unceasing flow of spirits were rather forced; and that, when the girl did permit herself a moment's rest, she looked anxious and wistful. But, as soon as she saw herself to be the object of such espionage, she flung herself into what was going on with more fervour than was—or than had been in the old days—habitual with her. Have not all women to play the hypocrite's part occasionally? And does their doing so render them less truthful, less worthy, or less capable, of suffering keenly?

A RUN WITH MANY PACKS.

THE meet is in the Barbican country; the cover is Playhouse-yard. The sportsmen arrive not on "hacks," but in those vehicles which our American cousins elect to call by that name. The packs need no whipper-in to bring them to cover, for they are made on the spot. They grow to any size and any stoutness. They go all paces, swift or slow, and best of all when "well in hand." They vary in number, being sometimes complete with sixteen couples, at others with twenty-six. They are singularly tractable. They may be

taught to do almost anything, even to speak; and, except in rare instances, they keep a secret well. Next to a secret between the horse and his rider, that between the pack and its master is perhaps the best kept of all. Yet they are subject to much ill-usage, and their spotted forms oft find themselves in queer company. They bark out hopes and warnings of the future to Molly Seagrim; they run kindly, very kindly, for the amiable Chevalier Des Grieux. John Law, Casanova, and other hunters of men and money trained them to strict obedience, and they have played strange antics in our own day. Their tendency is to run away with time, and sometimes with money; and, taking them altogether, they have probably proved more costly than all the other hounds ever littered. They are as like to one another as two pins. Their breeder's name is Hunt. Our packs are of the most dangerous material next to gunpowder, and their manufactory occupies the great kennels recently built by Mr. Hunt, upon the site of the theatre sometime occupied by Alleyne the player. The puppy stages, as Mr. Fred. Taunton, the M.F.H., kindly informs us, are gone through in the lower part of the establishment, where the first of a number of processes, equal in number to an *écarté* pack, are achieved.

In the remote middle ages of sport, before the invention of *bélique* and Napoleon, the art and mystery of forming a pack was made a great secret of, but there is very little secrecy in sport or business nowadays, and Mr. Taunton courteously and candidly imparts to us the whole mystery of the superb Mogul, the useful Harry, and the modest Highlander packs. The beginning of a pack of cards is—like that of much other mischief—in the printing-press. Formerly each sheet of thin paper included a whole suit—from the ace to the king; but experience in colour-printing has shown that it is better to print the court-cards apart, on sheets by themselves, on account of the greater variety of colours required in their production. Great heaps of these sheets, “pipped” all over with hearts and diamonds, clubs and spades, are handed over to the cunning workman, whose business it is to “marry” the faces to the bodies of the future “curses of Scotland,” and some other places. By those practically unacquainted with the peculiar properties of paper, it may perhaps be thought that playing-cards are like visiting-

cards, of a simple piece of cardboard, more or less luxuriously imprinted on one or both sides; but readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* will possibly recollect that, when we had the honour of conducting them over Mr. Brock's firework manufactory, at Nunhead, we explained that where great resistance and durability are required, *papier-mâché* is not to be compared with the material produced by pasting ordinary paper sheet upon sheet, until the proper thickness is obtained. Therefore the various sheets comprising a playing-card are “married,” i.e., pasted together, in the order in which they have been previously sorted. This is a process demanding considerable nicety, the object being to get as much paste into the paper as it will conveniently carry without being saturated overmuch. This is managed by giving the sheets a good coat of paste, and then allowing them to remain piled in a heap for some little time, at the expiration of which they are—still piled in a heap—subjected to an hydraulic-press exercising a power of ninety tons. But this pressure is not applied all at once, for if it were, the paste would be squeezed completely out, and the object of the maker defeated. Little by little the power is increased to the end that the paste, instead of being squeezed out at the side, may be forced into the paper itself, and retained there. So successfully is this performance conducted, that the card sheets come out of the press already stout and stiff, and only require judicious drying to harden them to a proper consistency. To this complexion then is our pack brought. Great solid sheets—over which, to the unpractised eye, hearts and spades are running wild, and others on which a court quadrille is being danced by the proper officers—hang suspended from racks in the drying-room, kept at a temperature which admits of little pause by the way. After this our pack, still hanging together in sheets, goes through a world of cleaning and flattening, until the sheets are ready for having various pretty designs printed on them—sometimes in as many as seven different colours. As for the faces, they remain ever the same—fixed, unchanged, and unchangeable. Innumerable efforts have been made by enterprising manufacturers to alter the complexion of their cards. They have introduced the portraits of dead and living celebrities, after the fashion of French cards. They have endeavoured to extend the range of hue

from the "devil's colours," black and red, to blue and green, and purple and gold. One maker—presumably an Irishman—and therefore heartily accepting the club as a shamrock, tried printing his clubs of a fine green colour, but though his cards obtained a small sale in the sister isle, he came speedily to grief.

Besides these bold innovators not a few of more limited range of thought have attempted to introduce slight modifications in the court-cards. As a tentative operation the colours of the knave of diamonds were slightly altered, and a large number of packs delivered without any notice of the alteration having been given to the purchasers. Those packs came back from clubs, from country houses and town houses—they came back in hundreds. They were "not good cards." There was something the matter with them—"everybody lost with those abominable cards." Card-players would have none of them, and the maker had to carry them to the "profit-and-loss account." The fact is that a genuine card-player has simple tastes: the great and little gambler have points of infallible similarity. One of the greatest financiers known to the writer, or anyone else, dines on a mutton-chop, well done, and a glass of weak brandy and water; the great operators of Monaco have been seen to satisfy nature with a bunch of grapes and a glass of claret and water; and in like manner the card-player loves simplicity in symbols. He cares for "the game;" the cards are merely accessories; and the simpler and more purely conventional they are, the better he likes them. Wherefore hearts and diamonds shall be red, spades and clubs black, until the end of time; they shall neither grow nor diminish in size. It was long before the double-headed court-cards obtained general acceptance, and it will probably be longer yet before the circular cards, or cards with round ends, will be acknowledged. Cards with the corners rounded off have been tried before now, but that attempt to anticipate the work of time was by no means favourably received.

Mr. Hunt found out these truths some time ago, and has devoted his ingenuity to the production of cards which shall charm at least on one side. As the card sheets are passed through the colour-printing press, they come out in many quaint and beautiful designs. As the whist-player deals rapidly the pack to be quickly cast aside, he has no time to

reflect that the image impressed on the back of the cards has required five, six, or seven impressions before the design came out in its integrity. Blocks, beautifully fitted, with "perfect register," as it is called, impress each colour separately. The work therefore is long, but when the difficulties in its way are considered it is performed with remarkable accuracy. In printing the "apple blossom" backs, they first appear gray, then pink, then green, and so on till the full complement of colours is made up, and the pretty design appears as the artist conceived it. Many of the patterns are singularly beautiful, but of course there are cards for people of all tastes. Lovers of nature—when away from the card-table—are appealed to by apple blossoms, pansies, lilies of the valley, and numerous groups of flowers arranged in Japanese fashion. Those of heraldic tastes may comfort themselves with a prospect of the royal arms of England, and those of the Prince of Wales, emblazoned in perfect consonance with the precepts of *Heralds' College*. There is, in fact, no reason—but expense—to prevent every gentleman and every club in England from having their own cognisance on the back of their playing-cards. This has been done in the matter of china, and would, perhaps, at once be adopted in cards were it not that playing one's host "with his own cards" savours overmuch of rashness to certain suspicious minds. The conventional designs which have recently occupied so large a space in decorative art also appear on Mr. Hunt's playing-cards. There are Tudor roses and other things unlike anything in nature, but well suited for the backs of cards, to be seen in scores. The fisherman is gently moved with a dragon-fly, and the sporting man generally with horses and dogs, gamecocks, hares, and hunting trophies. Not the least remarkable are the Japanese patterns in black and gold designed by a cunning student of human nature. The black-backed cards relieved by slender tracings in gold are admirably fitted to act as a background to a plump, white, well-shaped hand, and to dissimulate the ugliness of less well-formed extremities. There is one more style of card, probably invented by a scorner of his kind. On the back of these may be seen the four suits boldly depicted, and it is possible to conceive that partners might telegraph to each other by this means what to play. We do not believe that these cards are sold or bought for the

purpose of deceit, but their appearance is sadly against them.

The backs being printed on to the card-sheets, they must next be carefully dried. They are then brushed, a process which brightens their appearance wonderfully, and varnished. Then comes another brushing and cleaning, and then the card-sheets—after being rolled between two cylinders—are, so far as their existence goes, complete and fit to be cut up into cards. Like the dog in the burlesque song, they are "cut long" and cut short. First, they are cut long by a young man who pushes them under a rapidly-descending knife, and reduces them to long strips. A second operator cuts them "short," in fact reduces them to playing-cards now finished in every important particular. Then remains simply the sorting into suits, and it is impossible to witness this operation without pitying the patient girls employed upon it. If we mistake not, it is Mr. Charles Reade who made somebody complain of the crank because this species of punishment was uninteresting, that it made a man work—"grinding nuffin"—from year's end to year's end. What must the feelings of a sorter of cards be? She is perpetually dealing at the game of nullity; the punters at her table are the ghosts of emptied purses; the stakes are the revenues of the Kingdom of Nowhere. It must be a hard case when a foreign gentleman, having dissipated his "trente mille livres de rente," or some equally gigantic sum in ducats, finds himself compelled to settle down at Monaco and deal for the bank at a salary. This must be severe discipline to a "joueur pur sang;" but he has his moments of relaxation, when he can persuade a friend to take his last month's salary, and play it for his account against the table. The croupier who plays by commission always loses, it is true, still he plays—if only by fits and starts; but this poor girl, she deals incessantly and has no stake on. Does she feel it? Does she, when work is over, play a game of *bézique* with her mother in their attic? It is very doubtful. Probably she hates the sight of cards, and is only too happy to escape the eternal hearts and diamonds, clubs and spades.

It may be well to mention that the old conventional classification of cards originally was made by the sorter. Cards were all made of one quality, and after being finished were, according to their freedom from accidental defects, divided into first, second, and third quality cards, or

Moguls, Harrys, and Highlanders. The gradual perfection of the manufacture has rendered this classification unnecessary, but the ancient designations are still retained, to mark widely different qualities of cards. Wrapped, sealed, stamped, and packed, the cards are ready for delivery in thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of packs; and are despatched east and west, north and south, on their errand of weal or woe.

Cards are not unlike clothes. They have their early glory and their certain decadence. They are of various qualities too, and begin the world under widely different auspices; but all finish alike. Let us "take a run" with a Mogul pack. Your plump Mogul, highly finished, highly varnished, and highly enamelled, goes into the highest society to begin with. But his early glory is short-lived. For a brief instant he is the finger of fate. The points are "ponies," and five to two in hundreds is laid on the rubber. The hands which deal our Mogul are white and soft—sometimes too white, too soft, and too fleshy on the inside—to be able to resist the opportunity of "securing an honour." It may be the fate of Mogul to survive his solitary rubber and then ingloriously descend the scale of existence, but he may chance to see some fun at this early stage of life. He may be in the hands of a very clever dealer, of blue blood and noble name; and the clever dealer may deal a trifle too cleverly. He has dealt like that at the Ineffable Club any time this dozen years; has eaten of the fat and drunk of the strong—not too strong, for that would spoil his game. He has driven the best horses; ridden with the first flight; and ruffled it with the richest. But on this night his wariness has forsaken him. There are "confounded foreigners" present at the Ineffable, and their quick eyes mark the quick movement which "secures an honour"—not a great advantage at whist, but percentage enough to turn the scale, other chances being even, in the favour of a good player. There is an interruption, a slight discussion, no noise, nothing "ungentlemanlike"—save the mark!—the dealer is simply no longer an Ineffable, but is sent forth into outer chaos to mingle with such company as he may. Our Mogul too has fallen from high estate into that of a "club card," to be repacked, neatly enough, and resold, at a reduced price, to humbler purchasers—to quiet, honest folk whose hands know not how to "sauter la coupe" and who play their

little game of loo, more or less limited, their Napoleon, or whist, modestly enough. Mogul finds a difference in the hands which deal him—squarely enough. The hands are larger, possibly coarser; not very clean, perhaps, although covered with rings. There is not much money on Mogul this time. The hundreds have dwindled to units—nay, to fractional currency, crowns and half-crowns. Mayhap there is no money dependent on Mogul at all, and he serves to amuse a merry Christmas party in a snug villa, where papa and grandpapa, mamma, and the young folks laugh over a pleasant round game for nuts and such small cheer; Edwin and his cousin Angelina going shares in this little game, as a species of preparation for that more responsible partnership, to which Edwin looks forward in the intervals of balancing accounts. Mogul, who has seen men and high stakes, feels his position acutely, and reserves to himself his worldly scorn of the pleasant and homely scene in which he is finally built up into an edifice “to amuse the dear children.” But his end is not yet. He may live to be introduced to the house-keeper’s-room, where Mr. Binns and Mrs. Biffin play a snug game of cribbage on the sly; and his once aristocratic ears are saluted by plebeian shouts of “one for his nob,” or “two for his heels”—sounds at first unintelligible to the noble being who graduated at the Ineffable. Lower yet—he may sink to the bar-parlour of a sporting publican, where he will learn the mysteries of “all fours” and “brag,” the odds about the next great handicap, the chances of the next billiard match, and will hear language to which he has hitherto been unaccustomed. Lower yet—he will travel about the country in the pocket of the ingenious man, who is always ready to bet golden guineas that nobody can “find” the ace of diamonds, or the knave of spades, out of the three cards spread on the cushion of a railway carriage, or a waterproof coat laid on the turf of royal Ascot or jovial Doncaster. Soiled and bedraggled by this time, Mogul slinks into a tap-room, and marvels to find there is a game called “put,” the whole beauty of which consists in not shuffling the cards, but in recollecting how they were “planted.” Lower yet—he falls into the greasy pocket of the street Arab, and is pulled out now and then under the shelter of deserted buildings. If he escape this he falls into the clutch of a brown-skinned woman, armed with a deceitful basket—purporting to contain lace and laces, but

really yawning for stray spoons and other articles on which cats are supposed to eke out a precarious existence. From deciding the fortune of a blue-blooded dealer of exceptional cleverness, Mogul has fallen to guessing the future of a fraudulent handmaiden. The king of diamonds is a fair young man; the king of spades, a dark lover; the nine of hearts signifies money; an ace of clubs, a letter. What then becomes of Mogul? What is his ultimate destination? How, when, and where does he come to the end of his run? It would be as pertinent to ask—What becomes of the pins?

The end of the funny little French packs that one meets—ahem! that one has met when young and curly—in the salons sacred to “conversation,” is not so very difficult to discover. They often begin in mixed society, and run, six packs abreast, across the green expanse of a trente-et-quarante table. The hand that shuffles is that of an adept; the plump, white, be-diamonded fingers which cut are those of a demi-rep. On each tiny member, as the tailleur nimbly turns its face upwards, the eyes of the keenest sharpers in Europe are bent; for it is droll that the professed gamester, who gains his living by cheating at cards, invariably loses the greater part of his winnings by playing against a bank—be the same hazard, trente-et-quarante, roulette, or faro. He knows the odds against him to a fraction, and knows that the table must beat him in the long run; but still he plays, and plays on, confiding in systems, in series, in the “trois sec,” or what not. He cannot help it. The Spanish gambler who was distinctly bowled out in the salon of a lady who shall be nameless—for she is dead, poor creature, and will do no more harm in this world—has lost enormous sums playing against the bank at Homburg and elsewhere. Nay, the silver hell-keeper who won the Derby with a four-year-old, but did not get the stakes, when no punters came to play at his table would grow impatient, and then and there adjourn to a superior establishment of the same kind, and lose a handful of bank-notes playing against the bank of a friend and ally. The cleverest card-sharp we ever saw—outside of good society—was a Greek by country as well as by profession; but all the money he picked up in the by-ways of the sporting world went at the hazard-table, and the poor rogue often wanted a dinner. Thus rascals of high and low degree cluster round the bank at Monaco, and lose their

ill-gotten gains with a calmness and general good-breeding worthy of all admiration.

When the "taille" is over, the six packs are dismissed from the grand line of country over which they have been privileged to figure. They lose sight of the noble heaps of rouleaux and quires of thousand-franc notes; they hear no more the view halloo, "Faites votre jeu, mesieurs;" the tally-ho, "Le jeu est fait;" the who-hoop, "Rouge perd et couleur." They sink to the estaminet, and after assisting at combats for bocks and biftecks, are duly cut up, either into pipelights, or into markers for bétique or dominoes. Sometimes they are brought out under different auspices, and are subjected to much careful marking and training before they are surreptitiously introduced into the best houses—a process often requiring great skill, and no little outlay, as, for instance, in the memorable Havana case. A consignment of marked packs was taken to Havana by a couple of Greeks, and the shops of the town were cleared of their stock, thus the practitioners found in every house their weapons ready to their hand; but to whatever treatment Judith or Lahire may submit, their end is the same—to mark the game or light the cigarette.

An American pack may see a good deal of life, or have a "dull time," according to circumstances. If launched into existence at the noble games of poker, lansquenet, and baccarat, it will probably see good sport, and eke a powerful consumption of stimulants and sedatives. If introduced to a "square game" of faro, it will assist at a splendid supper, and will minister to the amusement of judges and politicians, self-made millionaires and professional thieves—all of whom may be seen by turns, "stacking their pile" round the silver box in which the pack is enclosed. If instead of a square, our pack makes its début at a "skin game," it must first go through the painful operation of sand-papery, that the operator in slipping off the cards may move one or two at pleasure. The company may be outwardly as good at the "skin" as at the "square" game, but one may be sure that somewhere in the fine suit of broadcloth worn by the dealer, there lurks a six-shooter, or at least a Derringer. Dangerous society this, but American packs often escape it, and enjoy a long—a tremendously long—lease of life in the bosom of a quiet family, who play euchre among themselves for "love," with a patience,

perseverance, and skill worthy of a better cause, and altogether amazing to the uninitiated. Whatever we may hear and see of the fierce delights of faro and monté, poker and lansquenet, the national game of the American people is, after all, euchre. They are eternally playing this most uninteresting of games. In Fifth Avenue and in Yorkville, at the "hub of the universe" itself, in Providence and in Baltimore, in bleak Maine and in sunny Ohio, in the boarding-houses of the Atlantic sea-board, and the log-huts of the Far West—euchre is always to the fore by night and by day, in doors, out of doors, and on the road.

American packs will not stand much wear and tear, and sometimes come to a very sudden and tragical end.

Let the scene be a bar-room in Ninth Avenue, part of that fringe, as it were, of Wapping, which surrounds prosperous and elegant New York. It is not a savoury retreat this "rum hole" of Mister Teddy O'Rafferty, who is, himself, an Irishman of the lowest type, and dispenses liquor, compared with which even Jersey lightning is mild and wholesome. There is plenty of drinking and card-playing going on, and the "fighting rum" is clearly beginning to take effect. Loud talk and fearful oaths rattle like an infernal chorus, when, all at once, comes the inevitable "muss." Our pack is flying in the air, scattered like autumn leaves; there is a bright flash and the sharp "ting" of a revolver, followed by the louder "bang" of a Derringer. There is a crowd and a rush for the door. One of the company is in no hurry. A minute ago Hunkey Wash was all fire and fury; but he is quiet now, and lies still enough on the grimy floor, amid the scattered pack, through which a dull-red stream slowly trickles. The Hunkey one will never "ring in" a "cold deck" again. His game is played out, and so is ours, for we are in at the death!

WHAT HE COST HER.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MARRINGBERD," "AT HER MERCY,"
"HALVES," &c.

CHAPTER XXII. ELLA SCENTS DANGER.

NOTWITHSTANDING the swiftness of our modern postal system, letters still "cross" one another. Nay, the very rapidity of our means of communication has begotten a new contradiction; for it sometimes happens that one receives a telegram

which tells us of the death of a sick friend, from whom one afterwards gets a letter. A strange experience it is to take such in one's hands, written but twelve hours ago, perchance, and feel that the thoughts therein contained the writer can no longer think; that the plans are valueless, since they were designed for this world; that one is listening to the words of a dead man.

On the very night that Ella despatched her note to Gracie, expressing the desire of her husband and herself that she should visit them, and painting their little schemes for her amusement in the most seductive terms—albeit she had little expectation that they would move her to leave her mother—Gracie had written to Ella, to tell her that her mother was dead. She received the note the next morning at breakfast, and knew at once, by its deep black edging, what had happened.

"See—poor Mrs. Ray is gone at last," said she, holding it up to her husband.

"Poor soul! It must be a happy release for all parties," observed Cecil. "One cannot but be glad upon Gracie's account, as it will permit her to enjoy life a little; she has had but a dull time of it hitherto. My dear Ella, how white you look! I should have thought your young friend had been too sensible, to write upon such a matter in a harrowing way."

"I cannot help being touched at Gracie's grief, darling."

"But you don't look touched so much as terrified."

And, indeed, such was the literal fact. There was not a tear in Ella's eyes; but her face had that frozen look which accompanies excessive fear.

"She writes very sensibly," continued she, taking no notice of her husband's remark; "you can read it if you please, dear, for yourself."

As she handed him the letter, she dropped a slip of paper it contained into her lap.

"I don't much care," said he, "for reading about this sort of thing, my dear: 'No pain,' 'sensible to the last,' 'love to yourself.' Well, that is very satisfactory. She will, of course, come up to us, as soon as she feels herself equal to going about and enjoying herself."

"That will not be for some time to come, if I know her, dear."

"Well, you ought to know her, if anyone does; but I should have thought she was not one to 'grizzle' over things that couldn't be helped. The presence of the commissary, too, will hardly be an en-

couragement to the sentimental emotions. I am quite sorry to see you so cut up, my dear."

"It is so sudden, Cecil; and just as I had written to her about theatres and amusements too! And the poor old lady was so fond of me."

"And quite right too; it did credit to her discernment."

There was silence for some minutes, during which Cecil read *The Times*, and Ella turned and twisted the little note, that still lay upon her lap, a score of different ways.

"By jingo, here's more news from Woolwich!" cried he suddenly.

"What news?" inquired Ella, in faint tones, but with a certain anxiety in them, nevertheless.

"Well, perhaps you don't recollect him; I introduced him to you once, however, upon the Common—one Whympier, a cadet. I remember you thought him rather good-looking, which astonished me. He was a wretched sort of creature, and yet—what luck some people have!—he has come in for fifty thousand pounds. He has only to change his name, it seems, to Hobson. It is not a pretty one; but what signifies about names?"

"They are not of much consequence, indeed," said Ella.

"Ah, that is one of your radical notions. I don't agree with you there; but a fellow like Whympier might change his name for anything—Cavendish, Howard, Plantagenet—and yet be no better than he was; and Hobson can't make him any worse. He has done it too, in due form: 'By Her Majesty's Letters Patent,' &c. I'll bet a sovereign he doesn't stop at 'the shop' another week. We shall have him up in London as a 'great catch' this season, you may depend upon it. It will be a case of who will be 'Hobson's choice!' If he were a better fellow—and since poor Darall's getting her seems out of the question—we would put him in the way of Gracie. I should like to see the commissary making terms with Whympier—Hobson for the transfer. My young friend used to be a precious screw."

Thus he ran on while Ella listened, or seemed to listen, with a loving smile. She was always amused by Cecil's light, bright talk; but amusement was not now the expression of her face; it was rather conciliation, the expression—if one might say so without offence—which Gentleman-cadet Whympier himself had been wont to wear, when seeking to gain Landon's

favour, or mitigate his resentment. And yet, for certain, she had done naught that day to anger him.

With her own hands she helped him with his overcoat as he took his departure for the City, and even lit his cigar for him.

"Your taper fingers are just the things, my dear, for that work," said he in gracious acknowledgment.

"I mistrust your compliments," answered she, laughing, "though I smile at your wit. Now mind you are to be home to dinner at seven."

"Oh yes, darling—unless I should telegraph. There is just a possibility of my being obliged to ask young Magenta—the governor wishes me to be civil to him, and he may come up to-day from the west on business—to dine at the club."

Ella knew that Cecil would not have been seen entertaining Moses Magenta at his club upon any consideration, but she only smiled still more sweetly.

"Dine abroad, or at home, Cecil, just as you prefer," said she. "Whichever best pleases you will always best please me, darling."

He kissed her and patted her cheek in complacent approval. Almost any other husband would have had his suspicions aroused by having such a licence accorded him for the future, which seemed to revive the days of Papal indulgence. But Cecil's face only exhibited that gracious serenity which betokens a mind at ease with all things, but especially with itself. If the British nation should have unanimously agreed that, notwithstanding the claims of the reigning family, it would set them aside in order to have the advantage of being governed by Mr. Cecil Landon, it is our belief that that young gentleman would have been in nowise astonished at the selection, but would have calmly and politely declined the designed favour, on account of the trouble to himself involved in such an otherwise reasonable arrangement.

Yet this, perhaps, was the first occasion on which Ella had ever wished her Cecil otherwise than he was in character, for notwithstanding all their disputes, and matters about which, beyond all dispute, she had a right to complain, she loved him still with passionate devotion. His very self-consciousness and confidence in his own attractions were not displeasing to her, since they corroborated her own opinion of his merits; but she did wish, just for once, that he had expressed surprise at her concession about his dining

out, and inquired, however jocosely, the reason of such unwifely acquiescence. If he had given her ever so small an opportunity in the way of interrogation, she would have taken advantage of it to tell him things which, without inquiry, he must needs know some day. But the door had closed upon him, he had not been told, and the telling was yet to come. And it must come soon now. Other people known to themselves had got hold of the scent, and the revelation had surely better be made to her husband by her own lips, than by theirs.

The slip of paper which had been enclosed in Gracie's letter had referred to it. "At such a time as this, dearest Ella, it is scarcely fit that I should write upon any subject save one; but if my dear mother could speak she would say, I know, 'the Dead are at peace already; see you to the peace of the Living.' There is some scandalous story afloat here respecting your marriage. Of course, if I could get about, you could rely upon me to deny it; but for the present, as my lips are closed, I think it right you should know; and that Colonel Juxon should know; that things are said about it—I will not sully my pen by saying what things—that ought to be contradicted."

For the last twelve months—that is, for the whole time she had been married, and for weeks before—Ella had been expecting some such announcement as this; had been well persuaded that the blow must fall, sooner or later, and yet had gone on, buoyed up by a baseless hope. Every day that passed without discovery had swelled that hope, until she had almost believed it possible that discovery might not take place at all. It is the way of all people who trust to the chapter of accidents to conceal a matter—the murder that they know must out. At first they feel that there is no escape; then, as time passes, they begin to flatter themselves that the peril is growing less; and when a long period has elapsed they become secure, and sometimes audacious. To this last state of misplaced confidence Ella had never attained, but she had reached the intermediate condition, and this sudden blow was therefore a severe one.

"I was wrong, I was wrong," she moaned, "to listen to my uncle, and not to tell all to Cecil, before I became his wife. He loved me then—Heaven help me if he does not love me now—he was full of passion and devotion then; that was the time to tell him. He would have married

me all the same, and in the way I wished. If he be so fond of truth he would have respected my oath, and not compelled me to break it. Why, why did I not tell him?" She put the question as though to another person, and leaning her forehead on her hands, seemed to await the reply. "I remember now," she went on, after a pause, "Uncle Gerard said that it would invalidate the marriage. How could my telling Cecil beforehand have done that? I was deceived most cruelly. My uncle said that out of spite and hate; I ought to have known him better. But stay, there was the lawyer's opinion! Perhaps, if I tell Cecil now, our marriage is invalid?"

She started up, as though she had been stung. Her face was for the moment no longer beautiful; despair and rage had transformed it. "No," she cried, putting her hair back from her face with a passionate gesture, "if there is justice in heaven such things can never be. Even a fiend—and Uncle Gerard is not a fiend—would never have permitted me to run that risk. 'Perhaps, if another told him, it would be no matter,' says the law, but only I. Yet it is clear I must tell him. Someone will do it, if I do not, and that soon; will it be to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day? Whom can I consult, without committing myself? The old man is my friend; I will tell him all, and ask him to break it to his son. And yet, how can I? when he himself advised me, while there was yet time, to have no secrets from Cecil. And yet Cecil has secrets from me."

Here the mobile face changed once again, and became hard and resolute.

"Yes, I know it; he has been false to me, and thinks of it but lightly. And what have I done at the worst? He has no right to punish me, even though I do deserve it. When he comes to know, I will say, 'Well, what then? I have deceived you, Cecil; I confess it, but I have not wronged you. Lay your hand upon your heart—the heart that should be mine alone—and tell me truly, you who are the soul of truth, it seems—have not you wronged me?' Then he will deny it upon his honour; that is what men do."

She began to pace the room with rapid steps, as some do to prevent themselves from thinking, as others do to encourage thought. Presently a cab stopped at the door. Even that alarmed her, notwithstanding her just uttered words. Could Cecil have already heard the

scandal that was afloat at Woolwich concerning her, and come to tax her with it? When she saw, through the blind, that it was his father, she experienced a sense of relief, and then again of oppression; such as is begotten by an opportunity one desires, and yet of which one fears to take advantage.

"So your mate has flown already, Ella, has he?" said the old gentleman, after an affectionate greeting. "I thought I would take him on with me in my cab, since I have a cab. I know he is much too fine to ride by the 'bus.'"

"He sometimes does," said Ella, apologetically.

"Yes, sometimes rides by it on horse-back," snapped the old gentleman. "Young men didn't go to business that way in my time."

"It makes him so uncomfortable, to travel inside," pleaded Ella.

"Then why don't he go outside?"

"It's the sitting sideways that disagrees with him."

"Then let him go on the box. Much better men, much 'warmer' men—men with ten thousand a year, ma'am—are not ashamed to do it."

"Perhaps it's because they are warmer, Mr. Landon," answered Ella, simply. "Cecil finds it so cold."

"Go along with you, you little witch," laughed the old gentleman. "You are incorrigible. I am sorry I missed him, because I wanted to have a talk with him, in your presence, upon a certain matter which has only turned up this morning."

"In my presence?" echoed Ella, a cold shiver creeping over her.

"Yes; it is a subject in which you are concerned, as much as he, though it has only reference to business. A telegram has come, telling me we have lost our managing man down in the West, where our operations are greatly extending. Some responsible person must be found to live at Wellborough at least three months in the year: it would be better indeed if he did so altogether. Of course such an individual could be got, but it would save a deal of money if Cecil undertook the matter himself. If he goes, of course you must go; and I came to ask your opinion about it. You could come up to town for the season, if your heart is really set on that sort of thing; and, in fact, I should not like to lose you for more, say, than half the year. Your income would be improved by it, though, till the nursery comes to be filled, you can scarcely want

more money. I daresay you will find the country a little dull at first; but, on the other hand, you will have more of Cecil's society. What do you think about it—that I may know what to say, so far as you are concerned, when I come to talk to your husband?"

"I am quite ready to do what you and Cecil wish, dear Mr. Landon." As a matter of fact the proposal charmed her. When the old gentleman had remarked that she would have more of her husband's society—he was referring, as she was well aware, to business hours—Mr. Landon did not know how much of his time, especially his evenings, Cecil spent away from home. There would be no such attractions for him, Ella reflected, in the country as there were in town; and more than all, they would be out of the way of gossip. It was a slender chance, but still there was a chance, that that piece of Woolwich scandal might die where it was born, and never follow them to a distant home. She could not contradict it, as Gracie suggested, because it was true; but there was just this "pull" in her favour, that even her enemies—and she had many such among the ladies of that garrison town—must needs take it for granted (even supposing this choice morsel of tea-table tattle were founded on fact) that her husband knew of it.

"You are a good wife," cried the old gentleman, seizing both her hands; "just the sort of wife for a man of business; and if Cecil behaves badly to you, I'll cut him off with a shilling."

"Should we have to leave London soon?" inquired Ella, with as much indifference as she could assume, though what she would have dearly liked him to reply was, "Yes, to-morrow."

"Well, if you go at all, it should be almost at once. I don't wish to be unreasonable, my dear. I have heard of the great picnic that is to be at Virginia Water next week, and understand the impossibility of interfering with that arrangement; but if you could contrive to leave town immediately after it——"

"So far as I am concerned, dear Mr. Landon," interrupted Ella, "I am prepared to give up the picnic."

"What, the Groves," with Lady Elizabeth, and 'really the very best people,' as your friend Lady Green calls them?"

"I don't care for 'the best people,' nor yet for Lady Green, twopence," answered Ella, laughing.

"My own sentiments, and my own expression," exclaimed the old gentleman, delightedly. "Cecil says, 'If you would only make it silver, father, and say one fourpenny piece,' but I am a stickler for the truth. So is your husband I am bound to say. The clerks who are straightforward all adore him, but if one ever deceives him he has to go forthwith."

"But that is very hard," said Ella, faintly.

"Well, yes, it is hard. But then young people are always hard—except where they are uncommon soft. And, after all, it's a good plan, for one deception involves a score of others in order to make it safe, and so the whole character of the man becomes rotten. However, I didn't come here to moralise, and I must see Cecil at once. Now that his better-half is on my side he will be easily persuaded, no doubt. You have behaved like a trump, Ella, and I look upon you less as a daughter-in-law than as a daughter. God bless you, my dear!"

He was out of the house and in the cab in a moment. Her pleading looks, her yearning eyes, had escaped his observation; he had only seen a pretty face, which had smiled a ready and somewhat unexpected acquiescence in his views. Perhaps it would have been all the same had he been less absorbed with the business in hand and more observant. His remarks about the clerks had chilled her. And surely in this projected change of residence there was a new hope of safety, a less necessity for confessing all.

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